

UNDERPRINTS & PERFINS

This is a letter to Dave Hill in response to an article which Dave had published in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*. As many of our members collect both underprints and perfins and there is a good deal of history and social history involved, I think this will be of interest to most of our readers.

Dear Mr Hill,

Your article on "Underprints & Perfins" in the July issue of the "Gibbons Stamp Monthly" was of particular interest to me because back in 1940 I was an employee of Copestake Crampton & Co, albeit for only a few months as explained later.

As you have said, Copestake Crampton & Co were Wholesale Drapers and in 1940 had a warehouse and offices in Bow Churchyard, which was a cul de sac adjoining St Mary le Bow Church in Cheapside in the City of London. St.Mary le Bow Church is of course well known for "Bow Bells" and the link that states that to be a true "Cockney" you have to be born within the sound of those bells. The Company was, what would probably now be called "old fashioned" and when I was interviewed for and subsequently got the job of "office boy" (the lowest rank in the office) I was required to sign a "contract of employment" in a bound book. My salary was, if I remember correctly, the sum of £3-10 shillings per month, say 85p per week in today's money. This salary was paid monthly in arrears and on pay day I collected my earnings from the pay office in the basement. The money was handed to you in a small black tin box with your number on it and you returned the tin so that it could be used next month, all very economical, no wasteful pay packets!

Now to explain my "Perfin" connection. I was employed as office boy in the Post Room and I used to go round all the various departments distributing and collecting the post. The Post Room was on the first floor overlooking the road known as Bow Churchyard which led up to Cheapside and on the bench in front of the window was the machine that affixed the "perfin" stamps to the envelopes. (*Ed:- I guess this was a POKO machine?*) One of my jobs was to put the envelopes through the machine (approx. 24"x16"x16" in size), by turning the handle. The stamps came to us in large reels and were loaded into the machine by my

"boss", a very pleasant lady. So I suppose I may have been responsible for the use of the "perfin" stamp illustrated in the magazine!

I was very happy working at Copestakes but sadly my job didn't last very long because of course the "Blitz" had started in the autumn of 1940 and one day after a particularly heavy night raid I arrived (eventually) at Cheapside to find that the warehouse and offices in Bow Churchyard had been badly damaged and that St Mary le Bow Church had also been severely damaged. My "employment cards" were eventually returned to me undamaged and I imagine that they had been held in the safe in the basement. The Company did try to find me another job with another Company but my own home had been damaged in another raid and my parents and I moved away so travelling to London was not convenient and I therefore took another local job until I went into the Army. When I returned to England from the Far East after the war ended I was given to understand that Copestake Crampton & Co had had offices in St. Pauls Churchyard but I could find no trace and have no idea what happened to the company. (*Ed:- the Company [limited since 1920] is in my 1956 Stock Exchange Year Book*)

Yours sincerely,
L.W.Pheby.

In Bulletin 257 (1992) Page 11-13 I wrote an article about Copestake/Moore/Hughes/Lindsay/Crampton & Co. All these names have been associated with the Company at one time or another. Bulletin 258, 266 & 274 saw other information sent in by members.

Only this week, DEREK MUGGLETON sent in a Sale Catalogue from H & B Philatelists Ltd with twelve examples of Copestake Moore Crampton & Co underprints. The prices range from £12-50 to £250, depending on stamp issue and plate number plus the type of underprint. There are two 2d blues, plates 12 and 15 (£22 range) and 3d rose plate 5 (£195) and 2½d rosy-mauve plate 5 (£250).

There is also two 1d Venetian reds, both with underprint but one with the perfin C/BOX/HC (C3400.01) for £75. Two years ago I paid £16-50 for the one stamp with perfin and underprint.